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If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves. and the truth is not in us.

+ John I. 8.

The willingness to make confession of fault- and unworthiness, in the sight of heaven, may be taken as being, in its degree, one indication of the height of spiritual development to which the individual or the race has attained. Where little or no disposition exists to acknowledge shortcomings and weaknesses, there will be only a small and feeble spiritual life. Where people feel that there is much of which they need to be forgiven, and are ready to say, both to God and men, that they have not in all things done what they ought to have done, there will be a truer sense of right, and a more strenuous moral endeavor.

Of all classes in our society, perhaps the criminal class is, as a rule, most impenitent; most conscious of its own virtue; most fully persuaded that it has received from the world unjust and cruel treatment. If one had a sense of hearing that could penetrate stone walls, to bring to him

report of what men say in their deepest seclusion, he would be likely to catch the accents of most heartfelt confession of wrong-doing, arising, not from any prison cell where murderers are confined, but from the secret closet of an worthy saint.

~~It is~~ We may observe that there is one kind of patriotism which cannot ~~be~~ admit, for a moment, that ~~its~~ its country has been guilty of any wrong-doing or mistake; or ~~that the nation~~ is in any respect less than the most glorious and the most advanced ~~of~~ among all the peoples of the earth. And generally that kind of patriotism can be counted upon to ~~thrust~~ push the government into a miserable pitfall, if there be any such ~~obstacle~~ snare within convenient distance of the national path, and if ~~its~~ a noisy clamor can be made loud enough to confuse the public mind.

The kind of patriotism which is most likely to stand by the nation in its ~~hour~~ hour of need, and to fight for it through good report and evil report alike, is that which has a very lively sense of ~~its~~ wrongs ~~which need~~ needing to be amended in the life of the community, and, which, like one of the great statesmen of ~~our time~~ an earlier generation, "trembles for its country,

when it remembers that God is just." Not those prophets of ancient Israel who were forever prophesying "smooth things" were the real leaders of the nation's life, but they who denounced unsparingly the sin and trespass of their race. It was in their minds that love of country was a deathless passion, and it was because of them that the glory of Israel did not fade away like a morning cloud."

It might almost be made a rule of human life and history, that race-pride is in inverse proportion to the possession of qualities and attainments which justify a people in entertaining a good opinion of itself. Find a tribe, or a nation, which has little or nothing of which it may justly boast, one that is ignorant, backward, incompetent, and full of superstitions; then you are very sure to discover the national consciousness seated upon a pedestal, from which it looks down in lofty scorn and contempt upon all the rest of mankind.

On the other hand, a people which is really great is not much given to shouting hymns in its own praise. Generally

the people of that race
~~they~~ see so much ~~that~~ which they would like to ~~change~~
make better
at home and abroad, and their heads are so full of
new schemes for the improvement of the world that
they seldom ~~take~~ pause to sit down and recount the
triumphs they have won.

So it is again, in individual life. ~~A~~ The
savage is swift when most quick to resent a
fancied insult. His self-love takes fire instantly
if so much as a look is thrown at him which he
can construe into a personal affront, ~~and~~ and he becomes
~~an~~ insane with rage and hate over an opprobrious
~~epithet~~, epithet, ~~and stops~~ stopping at no crime in his mad
endeavor to punish a slighting word.

Civilized man pays much less attention to
the ill-opinion of his neighbors, but takes
a great deal of criticism and misunderstanding as
part of the inevitable rub and friction to be
encountered in getting through the world. His self-
regard is not so easily ~~wounded~~ offended ~~and~~ he does
not deem it necessary to commit a murder, or to
fight a duel, in order to wipe out the stain ~~from~~ upon
his sullied honor, every time that a rival

or one opponent hints him to be less than perfect in morals and wisdom.

~~But~~ The average man, however, in civilized communities, does not yet stand quite upon the heights of spiritual development: and as the barbarian calls him base-spirited for submitting so tamely to an insult, so the man of the world cannot quite appreciate the counsel, which comes to him from the highest point to which human life has ever attained: "if a man smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also."

Beginning low down, with a personal vanity so unwilling to admit itself at fault that it must avenge in blood the least suggestion of unworthiness, we may may rise through various ranks and classes, in whom diminishing shades of this primal instinct still survive: till, when we come to the perfect man, we find it has entirely disappeared. He stands in the presence of those who nail him to the cross, with a prayer for their forgiveness on his lips.

He answers no blow or taunt with so much as a resentful word. When one calls him "good"

Master, he shrinks from the epithet, and reminds the speaker that "not a one is good." The only harsh words he ever utters are directed against those who "thank God that they are not as other men are," and all his promised blessings are for the meek, the penitent, the poor in spirit, who know that they can but little deserve of the infinite bounty by which they are fed.

These facts certainly mean something, and there should be no great difficulty in reading one great lesson that they teach. As the spirit of man grows, and rises out of its original low estate; as it unfolds new powers, and adjusts itself to higher relations; faster than ever it can put on new attainments, there rises upon its sight the wondrous vision of the true, the beautiful, and the good yet to be reached. What a man is, or seems to himself to be, will always shrink to smaller and smaller proportions, as he gains those summits, whence he can begin to look abroad over the majesty of the works of God and up into the realities of an ideal world.

To those gazing upward from the shadowed valleys below, it may seem that one who

has climbed to the top of some alpine height must taste supreme elation in the thought of his hard conquest he has made. Then probably, however, as he stands there surveying the vast panorama of mountain peaks spread out before him he is benumbed by the sense of his own littleness in the midst of all this grandeur, and feels the weakness of his utmost strength.

~~this or thought borne in upon him with almost crushing weight: "Most Lord, how small I am, and how feeble is my utmost strength!"~~

Just so we see how this anomaly in human life; that the sinful are, as a rule, least aware of their imperfections, because they have no fitting vision of the good, in which, as in a mirror, to behold their faults; the saintly feel most keenly that they have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, because they stand always in presence of a divine beauty by whose light their shortcomings are clearly revealed.

There cannot be much depth to that seeming virtue which craves and demands the admiration of men for its boasted perfections; there cannot be final death in the soul so long as from the depths of its humiliation it looks up adoringly to what is far above itself, and cries "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

It is sometimes charged, not without reason, that what is known in religious circles as the liberal movement of our time, has too much tended to slight the fact, and the significance of human sin; and is apt to be deficient in a sense of the world's guilt. In so far as this is true it does not indicate any moral weakness in the position which liberalism has taken, but ^ it shows that men and women are, unhappily, only in part true to the spirit of those movements with which they connect themselves.

For the real genius of liberalism consists in ~~a trust~~ reverence for ~~the real~~ indisputable facts of life: and ~~an honest mind~~ wholesome distrust of those theories and abstractions, by which, as one perceives, people have too much hidden from their sight the stern realities of existence. If liberal people too often fail to appreciate the power and extent of the iniquity that is rooted in human hearts, it is because they also, like so many before them, have allowed themselves to be, ^ in part victimized by a theory.

They have a strong belief in the absolute goodness and kindness of the Creator of men, and unconsciously, it may be, ^ they try to make the world about them harmonize

with that belief. They do not easily understand perhaps how
the good God could permit his children to involve
themselves so far in moral ruin, and therefore
they are disposed to deny that sin is such a
very serious affair. It must be "good in the making"
they think.
It cannot be much more than "man's ignorant
mistake." The true remedy for it is not punishment
but enlightenment. The suffering which it occasions
is merely incidental to the development of the race,
and is sure to be outgrown with advancing years.

Such ideas as these do unquestionably pervade
a great deal of the thought of our time, and one
sees that they may be responsible for a large amount
of the moral laxness of the age: that people who think
in this fashion may be disposed to treat both their own
besetting sins, and the evil of the common
life about them, with a patience and toleration
that contains not much promise of immediate reform.

It is to be observed however that these
ideas are almost wholly theoretical in their
character, and liberalism ought to distrust them on
that account. For the great truth that God is
good, we may indeed appeal to an enlightened
human consciousness, which is our tribunal of

last resort, and from whose deliverances there is no right or power of appeal. But when it comes to saying, in detail, how a good God will govern his world; what he will permit and by what methods an infinite mind will bring its designs to pass; there we are on very uncertain ground, and it becomes exceedingly difficult, in forming hard and fast conclusions,

The only safe course is to cling fast to, and never lose sight of the facts of real life, as they lie within the sphere of experience and consciousness; no matter whether or not we can build these facts into a logical and consistent system. For a knowledge of what sin is, and what is the measure of its guilt, we should consult, — not any general theory of the universe, but the oracle that is in each individual heart; the moral sense which life has organized and quickened within us, and whose instinctive assertions give us all the ground we have for administering moral praise and blame. ~~This is for talking about such a subject as sin,~~

Now no person, young or old, ever yet committed a fault, and was afterward able, with entire sincerity, to call that fault, in his own case, nothing but an ignorant mistake. He may have tried to persuade himself into this belief; and probably did

this endeavour to appease or overawe
~~most terrible sedition of~~ (an outraged conscience!
but spite of ~~all his address~~ every thing, there was a ghost
of his trespass,
called "remorse", that would rise up before him, and
would not down at his bidding. Still conscience would
point at him its ~~finger~~ an accusing finger, declaring
that, not
ignorance alone, but moral guilt must be laid at
his door.

The shame and humiliation in our own
eyes which invisibly accompany the act of sin,
are witnesses to the sad of him, that moral evil
is something more, and worse, than "good in the
making"; and that no thronging con ever destroy
~~mitigate~~ the real blackness of crime.

How do I know that these things are true?
I know them in my own experience; and so I am
fully persuaded, ~~every one~~ they know to every mind
which tries to be honest with itself, and with the light
of which it makes a part. We may listen to every
plea which charity, or self-love can urge; and
may take note of whatever can be said
as to
~~circumstances~~ the degree of guilt, accordingly as the
will has been more or less, bent and swayed by influences
that it could not control. But when all is
said ~~pleaded~~ that can be urged ~~offered~~ as a reason for

~~mitigation of~~ ~~the sound~~ sentence, when remains unsilenced that self-accusing voice which says: "you ought to have chosen, and you might have taken the better path, whereas you consciously allowed yourself to be drawn into this shameful way."

If that voice is not to be trusted, then I know not what certain guide we mortals have. Certainly a constant, unerring, unshaken, testimony like this, arising from the very depths of our being, is worth more than all the philosophizing of all the ages ~~put together~~, as an indication of the kind of life that has been bestowed upon us.

Now it is obvious that in the dull and hardened nature, the sting of remorse is not very keen or very hard to bear; is, indeed, easier to face, by other people, than the scorn and condemnation of ~~others~~; and so it is very hard to bring the wicked mind to make confession. ~~But we have much evidence to bear us out in regarding the assertion that~~ But perhaps in no living soul can the voice of an accusing conscience be altogether stilled; and as life rises in the scale of being, to the higher levels of sensitiveness and enlightenment, it soon reaches a point when the torture of bearing a consciousness of guilt is far beyond all other pain with which it can be compared; ~~and when it reaches this~~ and

~~life and strength, as fast as the torment of the~~ ~~thumbscrew and the rack.~~ When we begin to estimate the amount of this anguish, to say tearing and devouring the heart of mankind, we realize that the frantic desire of the world to find a "mediator" by whom it may be delivered from its sin springs from a great and terrible need of the human heart, ~~of its greatest and most fearful kind.~~

No doubt there is a certain amount of confusion which proceeds upon the foolish notion that God can be tricked into a bestowal of his mercy, by an appearance of humility; and is most likely to take pity upon those who ~~most~~ abjectly grovel in the dust before him. No doubt a guilty conscience may somewhat magnify the dangers to which it is immediately exposed from the anger of the powers of heaven, and mingle a great deal of purely superstitious terror with the soul's invincible pain.

But beyond all this; beyond all need, be it real or fancied, to secure the forgiveness of heaven; is the need and desire of the guilty soul to secure its own forgiveness, - to silence the accusations of its own ~~the remorse of that gnawing tooth~~ remorse; and this is perhaps what men are really seeking when they ask for pardon from their sins. ~~In taking~~ That language of Holy Writ, which speaks to us of ~~up this cry of human life I think we have~~ of the "sin of the world" is

not, therefore dealing with remote ~~and~~ or moral issues,' but ~~that is~~ comes close to the real essence of that life-struggle in which we are all engaged; ~~and takes~~ the very heart ~~of the matter~~, of that great tragedy in which so much of human violence has become involved.

By what word can we express the final gain, and the highest product of our common life, if it be not the word character? What else are we living for if it be not the attainment of those qualities into which purity, our faithfulness, and love, have firmly woven their deathless lustre and their matchless strength? And of this struggle to attain character, our strife against temptation and culpable weakness, is the most vital part.

No reputable man or woman of the present day, it is true, should be much exposed to danger from the allurements of ~~any of~~ the coarser forms of vice. But if people think, because they have conquered these more loathsome ~~forms~~ kinds of evil, they have attained a virtual perfection of the spirit, they cannot have much vision of the real beauty of holiness. Be the man of high or low degree; a mere beginner in life's school, or far advanced in the acquisition of wisdom; when he comes to the point of saying

that he has "no sin." he ~~wrongly~~ deceives himself, & his most grievous hurt. That is phariseism: an arrest of spiritual development: and it is one of the most dangerous phases of moral life: because while ~~he~~ the soul may pass through, and overcome, many pestilential vapors,— its course being lifted upward toward the life-giving hills,— nothing but slow decay can be the portion of that mind and heart, which thinks that it has come to the end of spiritual effort.

There are rules of conduct which govern the daily bearing of the noble soul toward its dependents and its friends. over whose infraction the Sensitive spirit will grieve more than any thing is likely to ~~can~~ repent his transgression of the statute law: and then is therefore no statement which people of every rank and degree can take more unitedly upon their lips, than the common confession: "We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts: we have offended against thy holy laws."

There are, of course, many questions ~~We may ask what is it~~ concerning the life of the soul which we cannot answer: Why should the memory of a fault ~~stand~~ so rankle in the mind, even years and years after it has been committed! Why should one be so ashamed of

the thing he has done, after it has gone into the unchangeable record of the past? These are questions which perhaps we shall never answer to our full satisfaction in this present life. ~~And it is vain to reply to say that our suffering for the past, unless we may look for the days to come~~ The great question for mankind is that

But, first of all, ~~our interest lies in the question~~ from an accusing conscience. How, except by putting on, an armor of reckless indifference, which kills the ~~coming and imprisoning the sensitive spirit, by an armor of reckless indifference~~ quick sensibilities of the spirit, can we soften the bitterness of the remembrance that we have sinned? That is really the hardest and the sharpest pain that men have to bear. ~~It may not always subdue it, is the hardest sorrow we can know.~~ No other angwish cuts so deeply into the soul as that which involves the partial loss of its own self-respect; and thereby, if the natural sentence of life does not keep men from evil, it is vain to think that the penalties ~~that this world can administer would be death.~~ our human law can accomplish that result.

~~What the~~ The help that has come to the world under the ~~name~~ load of the consciousness of guilt and sin; proving itself a real help, and containing ~~so that it be impossible what~~ ~~remains~~ no specious drug to make the soul more unresistingly the prey of evil; has come from the feeling of some filial bond between the human spirit, and that infinite

presence where hand is laid so heavily upon it.

Within the whole range of ~~human~~ earthly ministrations there is no other balm for the ~~soul~~ heart spirit, ~~which has wounded and bleeding from the shafts of sin~~, like that mere look from eyes of gentleness and purity, which says "I know what you have done, and I love you still." For something of that same assurance, coming from a higher than any human source, the heart of man is always full of dumb unspoken longings.

Therefore does the boundless compassion of the ~~life~~ mind of Christ seem to men such a blessed revelation of the love of God: and therefore does his Gospel, of the divine sonship of our race, mean so much to the spiritual welfare of mankind. God dealeth with us as with Sons! that proclamation, pealing an eternal Father, and not merely a dread Judge upon the throne of the Universe, is the real key to the world's spiritual progress and reform.

~~For under such oppressive authority, there cannot be that~~ The knowledge of an infinite Father's love for his earthly children, cures that paling of hopelessness which often turns the first false step into a long life of crime! With such a power above us all, we have the means of reinstatement, through His regard. for in our own self respect; although we cannot wholly forgive ourselves for the selfish indulgences

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The philosopher and the scientist may be content to worship at the shrine of an impersonal Deity. To intellect and understanding God may be the great "Unknowable"; the "Absolute"; the "Infinite Energy"; the "power not ourselves that makes for righteousness".

But to the moral man, and by that term we designate more nearly than by any other the real man; to the great host of our race whose chief concern is the fight with evil; and whose greatest hope is win enough virtue to be sure of heaven, there is no God save the everlasting Father of whom Christ taught.

He who feels the pressure and the problem of this great world-struggle, finds it hard, sometimes, to be patient with those founders of new religions, who seem not to be aware that there is any such fact as sin, or any need in the common life for its forgiveness.

But the religion of Christ meets this deep want of our humanity; and by making us sons and daughters of the living God, it gives us a new incentive in our fight with wrong.

and the wretched blunders to be laid to our charge ~~we have made~~, we can think better of ourselves because the Eternal goodness has not ceased to care for us, and because we are given the freedom that permits us to sin, in order that we may ultimately bear more of that likeness to God, ~~to which we have been created~~, ~~to sin in~~, moulded in the life of Christ. a

~~And as sons and daughters of the living God, we have a new intention in our fight with wrong.~~

Then are unworthy members of every noble family; yet there can be no doubt that the consciousness of noble birth, and the sense of those high traditions of his ancestry which lie on his part would betray, helps to keep every young Prince ~~of royal line~~, in paths of honor and ~~re~~ rectitude.

"Noblesse oblige" has passed into a proverb; and I know not how we can more effectually work, to save the world from sin, than to try to convince men everywhere of the truth, which lies at the ~~very~~ heart of the gospel of Christ, ~~that the truth~~ that in spirit they embody something of the highest nobility there is, in the whole order of created being; that, if they will only be true to the best that is in them, they are worthy to stand with Christ, in the very presence ~~of~~ of the Almighty; and that their sin is also grief and shame to an infinite Father, who loves them, and gives himself for them, day after day.